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25X1

Page Denied

25X1

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25X1

Contents



25X1



25X6



Zambia: *"Scientific Socialism" Provoking Opposition . . . 7*



Arab States: *Meeting of Steadfastness Front 8*

25X1



India: *Election Results 9*

25X1

Kuwait: *Financial Strains 10*



25X1



25X1

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25X1

Page Denied

Next 5 Page(s) In Document Denied

25X1

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ZAMBIA: "Scientific Socialism" Provoking Opposition

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A government plan to introduce a Marxist-oriented curriculum based on "scientific socialism" in schools is meeting strong opposition from church and labor leaders and could lead to violence. [redacted]

[redacted]

Comment: Kaunda's decision to revive the contentious "scientific socialism" scheme--the proposal was first made in 1979--is ill timed. He already is fully occupied trying to cope with economic problems, which have been aggravated by the collapse earlier this year of Zambia's \$900 million stabilization program with the IMF. [redacted]

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International prices for Zambia's principal export commodities, copper and cobalt, remain depressed. The agricultural harvest this year is a major disappointment and will necessitate costly grain imports. [redacted]

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Kaunda's handling of the issue, moreover, could increase strains between pro-Soviet and Western-oriented government officials. A refusal by Kaunda to compromise would be widely interpreted as a victory for the more doctrinaire Marxists within the regime. [redacted]

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Church leaders are likely to stand firm against the plan to alter the curriculum. If the controversy results in disruptions that threaten to get out of hand, Kaunda may accuse Western countries of abetting his church and labor critics. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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ARAB STATES: Meeting of Steadfastness Front

The foreign ministers of the radical Steadfastness Front, in a communique issued after a meeting in Algiers on Monday, called on all Arab states to reaffirm the decision of the Arab Summit of 1978 to break relations with Egypt. The communique also condemned alleged efforts to expand the war between Iran and Iraq through the participation of other Arab states and called for the "consolidation of relations with the friendly Iranian revolution." The ministers announced that the leaders of the Front's members--Algeria, Syria, Libya, South Yemen and the PLO--would meet in June.

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Comment: Syrian President Assad's recent visits to Libya and Algeria laid the groundwork for the meeting on Monday. Assad has been anxious to counter what he views as an Arab drift toward Egypt and to obtain support for Syria's alliance with Iran. Relations among the members of the Front, which was formed in 1977 after Egyptian President Sadat's visit to Israel, have not always been harmonious, and meetings have been infrequent and unproductive.

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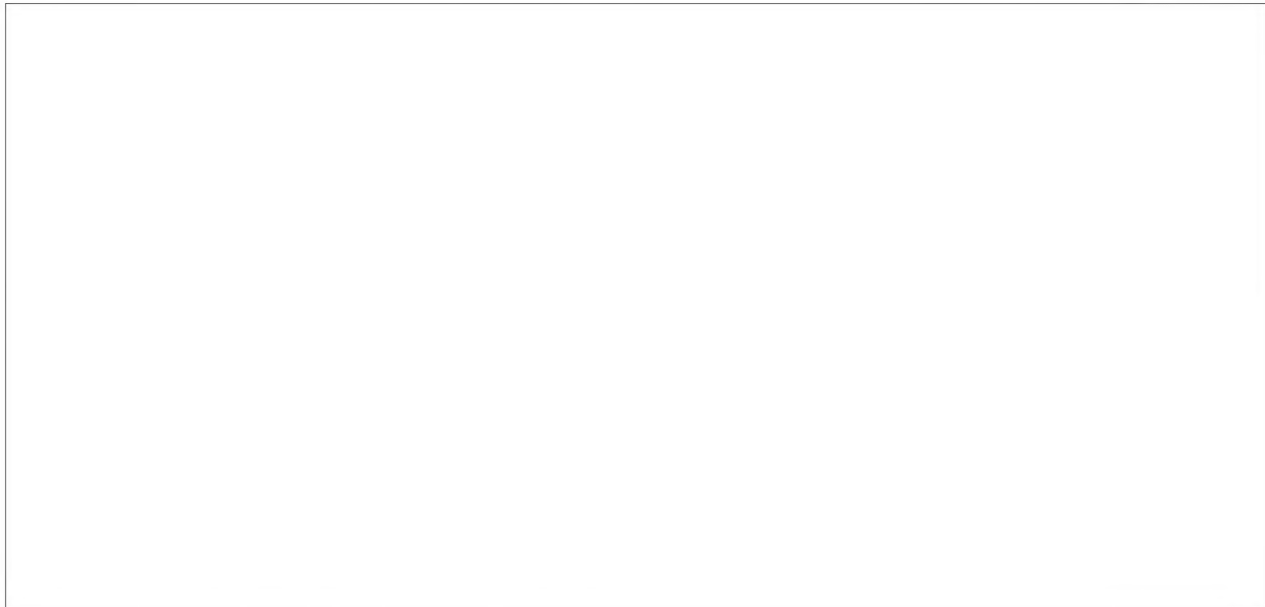
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INDIA: Election Results

Prime Minister Gandhi suffered a minor setback last week in the four state assembly elections and the contests for a handful of parliamentary seats. Her Congress Party, as anticipated, was soundly defeated by the Marxists in West Bengal, and it lost ground in two northern states. A coalition led by the Congress Party, however, won a clear majority of assembly seats in the southwestern state of Kerala, which had been controlled by the Communists until late last year. 

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Comment: The outcome of the elections almost certainly was a mild disappointment to Gandhi. The elections had been widely billed as a midterm test of Gandhi's popularity, and she placed her prestige on the line by campaigning hard in all four states. Despite her party's lackluster showing, Gandhi's opponents remain fragmented, and no opposition party emerged as a threat to Congress Party dominance. Her victory in Kerala reflected public disenchantment with the former Communist state government's inability to curb political violence. 

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KUWAIT: Financial Strains

//Kuwait is facing an economic slump because of falling oil revenues and the financial drain caused by Iraq's continued dependence on Kuwaiti loans to help finance the war effort. The Kuwaiti Government already has begun trying to trim its expenses by reducing domestic gasoline subsidies and by postponing for now some electrification and oil industry projects.//

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Comment: Kuwait's considerable foreign assets will provide a cushion if the current decline results in a balance-of-payments deficit this year. The Kuwaitis believe the reduced world demand for oil is temporary, and, despite their current belt-tightening, they are unlikely to shelve longer term plans for development and investment.

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